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Review of E. P. O'Donnell's *Green Margins*

Betty Gaylord

I. S. '39

WITH its setting in the wild, barbarous region which is the delta land at the mouth of the Mississippi, "Green Margins," Houghton Mifflin Prize winner, by E. P. O'Donnell, is greatly like its home delta in richness, fervor, laziness of action, resignation, and wild, exuberant beauty.

Mainly a story of Sister Kalavitch, Slavonian girl, the novel includes in ten years of her life all the emotions and experiences of a lifetime. With the coming of an "immaculate conception" child, so-called by the villagers, Sister's father drove the sixteen-year-old girl across the river to live with her "Grandpaw."

This change from her life of squalor and disillusionment with her tubercular father and lazy brother to a clean, even, spiritual life with this virile man of ninety had a soothing effect on Sister's proud, tempestuous nature. He spoke four languages, read philosophy and poetry, carved wooden dolls, played opera on a phonograph, and yet was content to remain a peaceful oyster fisherman—a paradox of mental activity and physical sluggishness.

"GRANDPAW" taught Sister many things—a love of books, a sense of humor, and a philosophy to veneer her animal tendencies. When he died she and her son lived together, in "Grandpaw's" shack, a vigorous, independent life, with Sister hunting and trapping along the river.

When her father's death removed the obstacle which had prevented her returning home, Sister returned to fight for a livelihood on the deteriorating river plantation which was the Kalavitch Homestead. Later she married Mitch Holt, her ex-convict sweetheart.

A vivid, engrossing story, beautifully told, the real plot of "Green Margins" is founded upon character development. The main figure, Sister, is unusual from a psychological viewpoint, but is convincingly real in all of her inconsistencies. The reader knows and understands the heroine's deep love of nature and passion for freedom, as well as her fundamental selfishness and self-absorption.

Minor characters are vividly painted, too: "Grandpaw," with his snowy hair and simple philosophy; Mitch, with his handsome braggadocio and "wandering eyes"; Pa Kalavitch, trying half-heartedly to fight drunkenness; and Brother Kalavitch, dreaming of inventions but never accomplishing them.

But Sister's life forms the main thread of the book, and upon its woof a shuttle of flaming character flashes back and forth, forming an entertaining, unusual, and worthwhile book.

Hands

Audrey Spencer

H. Ec. '38

HER hands, now quieted, awakened me from deep
Bewildered grief. And I could look my last
At her with surer eyes, for I could keep
Her faith—I had her hands to hold me fast.
I saw them stroke a frightened baby's head
Till he was calm. I saw them softly shine
In lamp light tucking little folk in bed,
And weave themselves in dreams both frail and fine.

I saw them gather columbine and fern
To share the flickering beauty with us all.
I saw them do the many things that earn
The gratitude of hungry hearts. They call
The destiny of my young hands to mind.
I wonder at the thoughts they'll leave behind.